

**Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board**  
**Public Hearing Pertaining to the Proposed Realignment of the**  
**James River Soil and Water Conservation District**

Tuesday, October 15, 2002, 7:00 p.m.  
Samuel L. Bland Administration Building, Prince George, Virginia

Hearing Officer : Granville M. Maitland, Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board

Mr. Maitland:

I hereby declare this Hearing in session.

My name is Granville Maitland. I am a member of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board and I also serve as the chair of the Appomattox River Soil and Water Conservation District. With me this evening are staff from the Department of Conservation and Recreation that are assisting with the conduct of this hearing:

Susan Block, Conservation District Coordinator based in DCR's Henrico office

Mark Meador, District Programs Manager based in Richmond

Michael Fletcher, Director of Development based in Richmond

We are here tonight to provide an opportunity for anyone with an interest in the proposed realignment of the James River Soil and Water Conservation District to express their comments. Anyone wishing to speak should sign the clipboard by the main entrance if you have not already done so.

Currently the James River district is comprised of Chesterfield and Prince George counties. A petition from the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors has been submitted to the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board (which hereafter I will refer to as the Board). The petition proposes establishment of a new district, solely within the boundaries of Chesterfield County. Virginia law empowers the Board to review and decide about formation of districts and resolve changes with district boundaries. The proposed name of this new district is the Chesterfield Soil and Water Conservation District. If this change occurs as proposed, Prince George county will continue to function as the James River Soil and Water Conservation District. Copies of the petition are available; please raise your hand if you have not received a copy and would like one to review.

The meeting tonight is second of two hearings established by Board. Last Tuesday night (October 8<sup>th</sup>) we held the first hearing in Chesterfield. Following these two hearings, the Board must determine from the facts presented and from other available information, whether there is reasonable need and adequate justification for dividing the existing James River district and

establishing a new Chesterfield district. According to Virginia law, this hearing provides public comment opportunity “...upon the question of the desirability and necessity, in the interest of the public health, safety, and the welfare, of the action proposed by the petition upon (i) the question of the appropriate boundaries to be assigned to such district, (ii) the propriety of the petition and other proceedings taken under this chapter, and (iii) all questions relevant to such inquiries.” If the Board finds that there is such a need, then it must next determine if the operation of each of the two districts is administratively practicable and feasible.

In accordance with provisions of the Code of Virginia, the Board has published notices of the two hearings in newspapers of general circulation for the areas affected.

Concerning the petition submitted by the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors, the Board has determined that the petition fulfills requirements established by state law, and the Board approved the petition during their July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2002 meeting.

At this time, for the benefit of anyone present that may not be familiar with the authorities and functions of the Commonwealth’s Soil and Water Conservation Districts, I will ask Mark Meador to come forward and provide a brief overview. When that is complete, he will read the petition submitted by the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors.”

Mark Meador:

Thank you, Mr. Maitland.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts are political subdivisions of the state and are established through actions of local communities according to provisions of state law. Among the authorities provided through the *Code of Virginia*, districts are empowered to:

- Conduct surveys relating to soil erosion and the conservation, utilization and disposal of water; and to disseminate information.
- Conduct demonstration projects to provide soil and water conservation examples to local communities.
- Carry out preventative and control measures for the conservation, control and use of water within the district.
- Enter into agreements and provide financial aid with agencies, or any occupier of land within the district.
- Accept, acquire and dispose of property –real or personal, or rights or interests therein.

- Make agricultural and engineering equipment available to assist land occupiers with soil conservation and the management of water.
- Develop comprehensive programs and plans for the conservation and management of soil and water resources.
- Serve as an agent for the Commonwealth and/or United States, by administering projects and activities and accepting gifts and contributions.

Today there are 47 Soil and Water Conservation Districts serving 98% of the land surface of the Commonwealth. Each district is administered by a board of directors comprised of citizens of the district's local community. There are over 300 district directors –the majority elected locally, serving on district boards without financial compensation and volunteering their services to their communities. Districts also employ staff to carry out the work of the district.

At this time I will read the contents of the petition from the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors.

“ The Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors has determined that there is need, in the interest of public health, safety and welfare, for a new district to function in the territory described below, the grounds upon which that determination is based being as follows:

- (A) The rapidly expanding area of available conservation programs, which require the expertise and assistance of the technicians employed by local Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the desire to better serve its constituents by increasing manpower and funding through the creation of an additional district.
- (B) The increasing need for advice and assistance to the citizens and businesses within Chesterfield County to address natural resource conservation concerns of this rapidly urbanizing county.
- (C) The ability to minimize the logistical difficulties of providing technical assistance encountered by serving an immense geographic area with terrain and accessibility challenges and the desire to spend less travel time between governmental entities in order to focus a greater percentage of time on local concerns.
- (D) A need for a separate Board, knowledgeable in local issues, to serve Chesterfield County only, thus realignment would allow a greater amount of accessibility to

the directors by their constituents by having meetings locally where local people could voice local concerns.

Accordingly, the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors hereby petition the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board as follows:

- (1) That the proposed name of the new district shall be the Chesterfield Soil and Water Conservation District.
- (2) That the territory proposed to be organized as a district shall include the entire area within the boundaries of Chesterfield County.
- (3) That the Soil and Water Conservation Board is hereby required to define the boundaries of the proposed district, to conduct a hearing within the territory so defined on the question of the creation of a district in such territory, and to determine that such a district be created.”

Mr. Maitland:

You have heard the reading of the petition. Anyone desiring to speak regarding the actions of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board will have the opportunity to speak. Please come to the podium, state your name, affiliation. Any statements you may have will be considered by the full membership of the Soil and Water Conservation Board.

*Keith Seward*  
*Chairman, Peanut Soil and Water Conservation District*  
*6<sup>th</sup> District Chair*

Thank you Mr. Maitland, I'm Keith Seward Chairman of the Peanut Soil and Water Conservation District and 6<sup>th</sup> District Chair.

I feel it is unfair to the other Soil and Water Conservation Districts at this time to split the districts. We've already had a budget cut this fiscal year. With the Governor's cuts we have other budget cuts coming. With this new district comes other cuts to help fund that district.

*Don Bagshaw*  
*Elected Director, Prince George*  
*James River Soil and Water Conservation District*

Mr. Bagshaw read a letter addressed to David Moyer, Chair, Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board:

Dear Chairman Moyer:

The purpose of this letter is to reiterate and clarify the position of the James River Soil and Water Conservation District Board on the petition filed by Chesterfield County to form the Chesterfield Soil and Water Conservation District.

In a correspondence date July 11, 2002 the District stated the following:

“In recognition of county population and land use differences, the James River Soil and Water Conservation District supports Chesterfield County’s request of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District, so long as proportionate funding is allocated to all Districts across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The following statement should clarify and misunderstandings that resulted from said correspondence:

“In recognition of county population and land use differences, the James River Soil and Water Conservation District supports Chesterfield County’s request of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board to withdraw from the James River Soil and Water Conservation District, as long as the potential reduction in allocating core funding is shared equally among all soil and water conservation districts.”

If we can be of assistance during this process please contact us.

Sincerely,

Linda McAllister  
District Administrator

*Brad Hammer*  
*Deputy County Administrator, Chesterfield County*

My name is Brad Hammer. I am the Deputy County Administrator for Chesterfield County representing the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors. The Board expresses it’s sincere appreciation to the state board for considering this request.

Chesterfield is surrounded by the Appomattox and the James Rivers. At this time we are under severe drought restrictions. Much has been said over a short period of time about the problems with the state budget. The Chesterfield Board of Supervisors requests that the Board realize this is an issue of improving services to Chesterfield citizens particularly the school age children.

In Summary we believe the small amount of funding that would be made not available is not a high cost to pay for an improvement to services

Thank you for your consideration.

*John Kinch  
Chesterfield Farm Bureau*

I represent the Chesterfield Farm Bureau. We are in support of the creation of the Chesterfield Soil and Water Conservation District. We urge strongly that farm representation on the Chesterfield Board be done just as on the state board. We have a large number of farms in our area and feel that we must be represented.

Thank you.

*Tony Banks  
Resident, Prince George County*

I am Tony Banks, a resident of Prince George County and I am here to speak in support of the creation of a new Soil and Water Conservation District. Funding issues aside, the predominant land uses and the difference of land owners between each county are as different as night and day. It would probably serve the residents of each county better so that the Boards could focus on support of residents in each county.

With respect to funding there have been informal and formal discussions that perhaps Prince George or Chesterfield could be realigned with another Soil and Water Conservation District. I consider that a band-aid concerning the funding issue.

I support James River Soil and Water Conservation District representing Prince George and Chesterfield Soil and Water Conservation District representing Chesterfield.

*Nathaniel Elliott  
Chairman, Prince George County Board of Supervisors*

My name is Nathaniel Elliot. I am Chairman of the Prince George County Board of Supervisors. Here tonight I have with me three other members of the Board of Supervisors, Mr. Floyd Brown, Mr. Wade Lanning and Mr. Jerry Skalsky.

I have a resolution that I would like to read at this time. (Copy Attached)

Resolution

At a regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Prince George held in the General District Courtroom, Prince George County Courts Building, 6601 Courts Drive, Prince George, Virginia this 8<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2002

On motion of Mr. Skalsky, which carried unanimously, the following Resolution was adopted:

**RESOLUTION: PETITION SUPPORTING FORMATION OF SEPARATE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT FOR PRINCE GEORGE COUNTY.**

WHEREAS, The Prince George County Board of Supervisors has determined that there is need, in the interest of public health, safety and welfare, for a new district to function in the territory described below, the grounds upon which that determination is based being as follows:

- A. The rapidly expanding area of available conservation programs, which require the expertise and assistance of the technicians employed by local Soil and Water Conservation Districts and to better serve its constituents by increasing manpower and funding through the creation of an additional district.
- B. The increasing need for advice and assistance to the citizens and businesses within Prince George County to address natural resource conservation concerns of this rapidly developing county.
- C. The ability to minimize the logistical difficulties of providing technical assistance encountered by serving an immense geographic area with terrain and accessibility challenges and the desire to spend less travel time between governmental entities in order to focus a greater percentage of time on local concerns.
- D. A need for a separate local board, knowledgeable in local issues, to serve Prince George County only, thus realignment would allow a greater amount of accessibility to the directors by their constituents by having meetings locally where people could voice local concerns.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED That the Prince George County Board of Supervisors hereby petitions the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board as follows:

- 1) That the proposed name of the new district shall be James River-Prince George Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 2) That the territory proposed to be organized as a district shall include the entire area within the boundaries of Prince George County.
- 3) That this recommendation for division of the James River Soil and Water Conservation District is being made with the stipulation that Prince George County and Chesterfield County become independent districts to themselves. Any other configuration of district size is not recommended.

*W.D. Krider*

This seems to be a very controversial district. In 1940 when districts were formed there were approximately 20 districts. 1940 is not 2002. Needs have changed since 1943.

What I'm saying is things have grown. We have progressed from 23 districts to 47. It tells me that the 23 districts were not functioning properly, were not putting conservation on the ground and there was a need for more.

Please consider conservation for this. A small amount of funding can be absorbed in many ways. We are holding a state convention in Virginia. That reduction right there could accomplish the need state wide. I just ask that you put conservation on the ground and consider matters as they are. I think the split could be very advantageous to both counties.

We have two counties that are entirely different. They are divided by a river and distance. It is much easier to write a conservation plan for 300 acres than for a gentleman with 10 acres who has no idea what he needs.

In attending the convention last year, I started seeing the awards at that thirty-four dollar a meal banquet. The majority of the districts that came up with awards were single county districts. That is telling me that smaller districts can be more functional and can do a better job. I can foresee that if we form a new district that in five years we will be winning some awards.

Mr. Maitland:

Is there anyone else that would like to speak or offer any comments?

If not, please accept my thanks and appreciation on behalf of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board, to those of you here tonight that have contributed your views towards the matter before the Board. The record will remain open until October 22, 2002 to receive any written statements. Written statements should be mailed to the attention of David L. Moyer, Chair of the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board; 203 Governor St., Suite 206; Richmond, Virginia 23219.

This matter will come to the Board's attention in December.

With no further business or discussion, I declare this hearing closed.